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THE CHICAGO PATRIOTIC FOOD SHOW

A BRIEF REVIEW OF ITS MAIN FEATURES

By

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DEPARTMENT OF SURVEYS AND EXHIBITS
RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION

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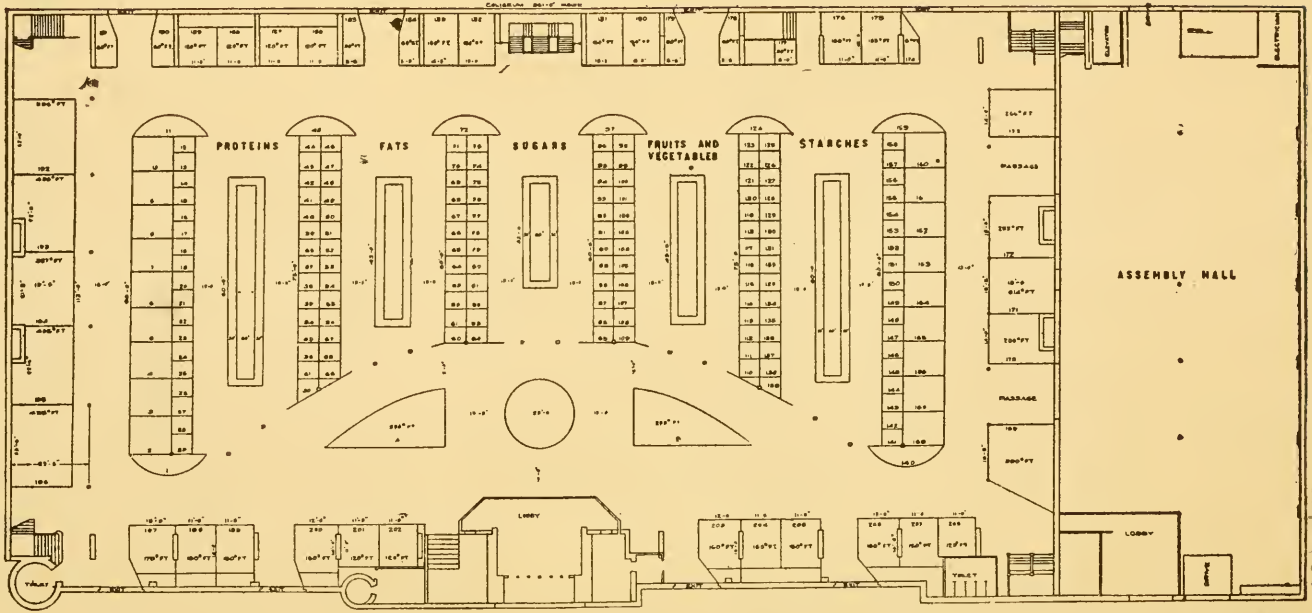
FLOOR PLAN OF CHICAGO COLISEUM WHERE PATRIOTIC FOOD SHOW WAS HELD.



In addition to the exhibits of foods appropriate to each section, space was occupied as follows: A-B, 205, U. S. Food Administration; 175, U. S. Fuel Administration; 179-184, U. S. Army and Navy; 187-188, U. S. Bureau of Fisheries; 197-202, U. S. Department of Agriculture; 206, Garden Bureau; 207, Library Section, Illinois Food Administration; 1, 11, 45, 72, 97, 124, 140, 159, Cook Books Sold.

The Chicago Patriotic Food Show

By Mary Swain Routzahn,

Department of Surveys and Exhibits, Russell Sage Foundation.

This review was prepared solely as an office memorandum and not for publication. The author agrees to share these informal notes with our readers with the expectation that their character will not be misunderstood.—Editor's Note.

THE Chicago Food Show was significant because it was a patriotic educational enterprise, and it was managed as such throughout.

The plan was initiated by the State Council of Defense, whose members delegated its management to a business man, Mr. Louis Stumer. Mr. Stumer gave his services and carried out the work with a few salaried associates and a number of volunteers.

Floor Plan.

The floor plan was one of the most satisfactory arrangements that I have seen. The scheme was a division into five main sections of proteins, fats, sugar, fruits, vegetables and starches. As you entered the Coliseum you faced a semi-circular group of five attractively decorated archways leading into the five sections. Over each archway, in large illuminated letters, fully 3 feet high, was the name of the section. As you entered one of the sections you found a demonstration space, running the full length of it (40 feet) with an aisle on either side. This space was an oblong surrounded by broad counters. Facing the demonstration booth, on two sides, were a series of booths containing the commercial exhibits appropriate to that section. For example, when you had passed through the arch into the sugar section, in the center you saw demonstrations of the preparation of foods with the use of sugar substitutes. By reference to your Patriotic Cook Book you found the numbered recipe for the demonstration. Across the aisle on either side you saw displayed samples of the various sugar-saving products that were used in the demonstration.

Along the walls of the hall were government exhibits of the Department of Agriculture, the Fisheries Bureau, the Army and Navy, and so on.

This scheme made it simple to take in at a glance the whole Show so that you knew what there was to see and could choose what you would give your attention to. It did away with the con-

fusion that is usually felt in an exposition where there is a bewildering array of booths and no particular logic in their arrangement.

Demonstrations.

The demonstrations were conducted by the home economics department of colleges and schools. There were students of the schools in constant attendance with teachers in charge. These demonstrations were made especially useful by the sale of a cook book prepared for the Show and containing recipes demonstrated at the Show. The cook book (72 pages) sold for 5 cents.

The two ends of the demonstration space were used for preparation of foods and the sides for serving samples of these foods to visitors and for answering their questions. Each demonstration booth had a complete kitchen equipment.

Uses of Signs.

All of the signs used in the demonstration booths and in the United States Food Administration exhibit were supplied by the Food Show management. The demonstration divisions apparently turned in as much copy as they wished and the signs were made up on blank white cards with black letters, according to the sign writers' ideas of arrangement. There was no attempt to reduce the amount of copy or to suggest a lay-out which would display the words to advantage. The food demonstration booths were literally plastered with heavily-worded signs of many sizes and shapes that took away considerably from the attractiveness of their appearance. An opportunity was lost here in not placing this sign preparation in the hands of an exhibit director who would on the one hand help the exhibitors to make their material more interesting and suitable, and on the other hand guide the sign writers in making layouts that would present the material more attractively and clearly. Again, an opportunity was lost in not providing cards more attractive in appearance and not having definite rules laid down as to the places where such cards could be displayed.

The Management.

Initiated by the State Council of Defense.

Managed by a volunter business man, Louis Stumer.

Exhibits directed by Robert G. Gould, publisher of the AMERICAN FOOD JOURNAL, Chicago.

Demonstrations directed by Mrs. Lynden Evans, director of the Chicago School of Domestic Arts and Sciences, assisted by the following schools and colleges:

University of Illinois.
University of Chicago.
Chicago Public Schools.
Lewis Institute.

Chicago School of Domestic Arts and Sciences.

A few volunteer committees were formed for the following special assignments:

Sale of space.
Advance sale of tickets.
Construction and decoration.
Advertising and publicity.
Auditing.
Hostesses.

There was no attempt to organize committees on a large scale or to get work done through committees.

The detail work was very largely carried out by the manager himself and by such individuals as would give their time liberally.

It was expected by the management that the cost, estimated at about $20,000, would be covered by the sale of space and tickets. Their plan in case of a surplus was to use it for patriotic purposes.

Commercial Exhibits of Food by Manufacturers.

The sale of space for these exhibits was managed by a food specialist who was careful to admit only such exhibits as conformed to the Food Administration's program. Each exhibitor agreed to have his exhibit carefully censored and to conform to the rules laid down as to what claim he might make for his product, through his exhibit, printed matter, and demonstrations.

The importance of having a show of this kind managed by a non-commercial group was strikingly illustrated by the Chicago Show. It was necessary in a number of cases to censor exhibits and in some instances even after the Show had started, displays were entirely changed because they did not come up to the requirements. For example: one packer showed a tempting display of the meats whose use is especially discouraged by the Food Administration. This exhibit was changed to one showing the cheaper cuts of meats and the kinds and the substitutes for meat that the packer had for sale.

In several instances the extravagant claims of the exhibitor were caught up and stopped. Further, the commercial exhibits had but limited significance except as the exhibitors carried out suggestions made by the management. The manufacturers as a whole displayed very little imagination and originality in bringing out the features of their products that are most significant for food conservation. The manager of the Show told me that if he had it to do over again he would have made a much greater effort to show the exhibitors how they could make their displays educational and at the same time good advertising for themselves.

Publicity.

The publicity methods used were chiefly the following:

Newspaper publicity.

Newspaper advertising.

Advertising through billboard, car card and window card.

Window displays in large department stores.

Sales of blocks of tickets to large business and manufacturing houses.

The participation of large numbers of people, particularly school children.

Two special features that were used to make copy for newspaper use were:

A daily program of music and speaking, which included a number of prominent speakers.

The appointment of a woman prominent socially for each day with a group of assistants selected by her.

A striking feature of the Show that made good copy was the mess hall conducted by the Army on exactly the plan used in the Army camps.

The advance sale of large blocks of tickets was a particularly good method for increasing attendance. Whereas the regular admission price was 25 cents, employers and others could obtain tickets in advance for 15 cents each. Some of them bought tickets numbering in the thousands to distribute to employes. Department stores sold tickets at 15 cents in advance to their customers.

Window Displays.

An excellent example was afforded of the high degree to which window trimmers have developed exhibit technique in comparison with the exhibitors and educational leaders.

In connection with the Show the larger department stores each devoted one window to a display on food conservation. Comparing these windows with the displays at the Show itself, one would be immediately struck with the contrast between the effectiveness of the windows and utter ineffectiveness of most of the exhibit displays. Each of the window trimmers had an idea which he carried out with attention to every detail. One or two of them had exhibits that were among the best I have seen at any time. Incidentally I learned that the Food Show management had first approached the managers of the department stores and having obtained their consent, arranged a meeting of window trimmers. At this meeting the purpose of the Food Administration was given and such literature as they desired distributed. Each window trimmer was then left to work out the idea for himself.

Summary of Criticisms of the Show.

Favorable Features:

1. The control of the whole enterprise by a non-commercial committee interested solely in making it an effective educational enterprise.

2. The prominent featuring of the educational demonstrations with the commercial exhibits made subordinate to the demonstrations.

3. The excellent scheme by which the cook book was made to serve as a guide to the demonstrations. A number posted in each demonstration booth corresponded to the number of the recipe in the cook book, thus visitors took home directions for carrying out what they saw.

4. The excellent floor plan and the attractive appearance of the whole Show.

5. The excellent exhibit of the Army in the form of a mess hall, serving meals to visitors.

6. The window exhibits in department stores as an advance advertising feature.

7. The advance sale of blocks of tickets through commercial and manufacturing firms and schools.

Unfavorable Features:

1. The lack of provision for effective exhibits in connection with the demonstrations.

2. The unattractive and badly arranged signs used in the demonstration booths which contrasted with the finished appearance of the construction and equipment.

3. Insufficient use by the majority of the commercial exhibitors of opportunities for making their exhibits educational.

4. The lack of training of the demonstrators to meet the audience and get over to them the significant features of their demonstration. (This may have been improved as the Show progressed. My judgment is based on the first two days of the Show only.)

5. The musical program given throughout the afternoon and evening which made it extremely hard for the demonstrators to be heard. The music was in direct competition to the educational work of the Show.

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